

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action of March 23, 2005, Applicant elected Group 1 and FIG. 3 with traverses and argued that because the method set forth in claim 41 is effectively the same in scope as the system claimed in claim 1, and the system in claim 1 is made by the method set forth in claim 41, it would be more efficient for both the applicant and the Patent and Trademark Office to Examine all claims of the invention at once. The Examiner sent a detailed action indicating the prior office action as being not fully responsive because claim 1 references keyholes, and only FIGs. 1 and 2 reference this feature.

Applicant respectfully notes that the feature (keyholes 134 and 138) are discussed as being the preferred configuration in the metal plates 104 and 108. Thus, the keyholes are preferably present in those same metal plates 104 and 108 which are shown in FIG. 3. In the interest of brevity, Applicants did not discussed every feature of every piece of structure with respect to every figure of the application. Likewise, Applicants did not label every feature in the drawings which had been clearly discussed in prior drawings, to keep the drawings uncluttered.

It is clearly stated, however, that the embodiment of the invention shown in FIG. 3 is "a cross-sectional view of a joint similar to that shown in FIG. 2 . . ." (§ 0023). Each of the components in FIG. 2 is present in FIG. 3. Thus, Applicants are still unclear why the FIGs. were identified as separate species. To resolve any further dispute, however, Applicants have added the appropriate reference numbers to FIGs. 2 and 3 to resolve

any concern that holes 134 and 138 (preferably keyholes) are present both in FIG. 2 and FIG. 3. If desired, Applicant will also amend the remaining figures to add the specific features which were previously discussed regarding the metal plates, holes, etc.

If the amendment to the drawings does not resolve the Examiner's concerns, it is requested that he call Applicant's counsel to resolve the matter.

With respect to the identified species, Applicant submits that claims 1-7, 12-18, 21-22, 27-44 and 50 all read on FIG. 3.

The claims have been amended to correct minor typographical errors and substitute formal drawings have been provided. Additionally, it was discovered that the claims were improperly designated in the original response, and the designations have been revised appropriately.

Applicants have added new claims 54-57 to clarify that the seam between the plates can include a situation, as in FIG. 3, where the metal plates are not in direct contact with one another. Thus, plates may be touching or spaced a small distance apart and still form a seam, as shown in the various embodiments of the invention.

Applicants have also amended the first paragraph of the specification to include the filing date of the provisional application. The filing date was inadvertently omitted from the Application when originally filed, but was properly identified on the Filing Receipt. Thus, Applicants did not notice the omission of the filing date upon receiving the filing receipt. Therefore, while Applicants believe that the original priority claim was

adequate, as counsel has been informed by the PTO that the correct information on the filing receipt is adequate for the four month deadline. To the extent that this is not the case, the Commissioner is invited to treat this amendment as a petition for a delayed priority claim and authorized to charge the fee to Account No. 502720. Any delay in amended the application to include the filing date of the provisional application was unintentional.

In light of the amendments, Applicants submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Additionally, as the generic claims read on the non-elected species, it is requested that claims drawn to the non-elected species be considered.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to credit any overpayment or debit any amount owing to Account No. 502720.

DATED this th17 day of June, 2005.

Respectfully submitted,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randall B. Bateman".

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IN THE DRAWINGS:

Please replace the originally filed FIGs. 2 and 3 the enclosed drawings attached hereto.